



News Release



Southeastern Utah District
Health Department

For Immediate Release

August 4, 2006

Media Contacts:

David Cunningham

Health Officer

Southeastern Utah District Health Department

(435) 637-3671

Cody Craynor

Utah Department of Health

Public Information Officer

(801) 538-6232

Public Health Agencies Announce Next Steps to Address Cancer Concerns of Monticello Residents

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH), in partnership with the Southeastern Utah District Health Department (SEUDHD), today announced next steps to address the concerns of the residents of Monticello, Utah, regarding a perceived increase in cancer rates in the community attributed to past exposures to a former uranium and vanadium processing mill.

Public health officials will take the following action steps, with a target completion date of December 2006:

- The UDOH will work with the Utah Cancer Registry to collect detailed patient information to confirm a diagnosis of cancer among individuals in Monticello that were never reported to the Utah Cancer Registry for various reasons. The UDOH will then conduct a follow-up study of cancer incidence that will include the additional individuals diagnosed with cancer.
- The UDOH will conduct a Public Health Assessment of the Monticello mill site and vicinity. The assessment will evaluate environmental data, past and current exposure data, health effects data and community health concerns.
- The UDOH, SEUDHD and Monticello community will work to develop educational activities and prevention programs for residents. These activities and prevention programs will focus primarily on cancer risks and respiratory diseases.

Page 2 of 2 – Public Health Agencies Announce Next Steps to Address Cancer Concerns of Monticello Residents

- The UDOH and SEUDHD will hold public meetings with the community and elected officials to present the findings of the cancer investigation and the Public Health Assessment.

“We hope that these next steps will bring us closer to understanding the cancer incidence in Monticello and any possible connection to the mill,” said Dr. David N. Sundwall, M.D. executive director, UDOH. “The community needs answers, and we are committed to working with them to find those answers using the best science and resources available to us.”

Earlier this year, the UDOH completed a health consultation report (study) at the request of the SEUDHD to determine if the Monticello community had higher rates of individuals diagnosed with cancer as compared to the state of Utah collectively. The findings of the study were inconclusive due to study limitations and could not provide clear answers to the concerns of the community. The results of the study were presented to the community on May 24, 2006 in Monticello. The full text of the report presented on May 24, 2006 in Monticello is available online at:

http://health.utah.gov/epi/enviroepi/activities/EPHTP/052206_FINAL_.pdf.

From 1943 through 1960, a uranium and vanadium processing mill operated just southeast of Monticello, Utah. The mill site and surrounding properties were considered public health hazards and were placed on the National Priorities List. Remediation of contaminated soils from the mill site and affected areas surrounding mill property was completed in 2000.

#

The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.